

# Better Homes and Centers

Michigan Department of  
Social Services  
Division of Child Day  
Care Licensing

Vol. 1 Winter 1983

## FIRE SAFETY IS NO ACCIDENT

It was almost time to put out the morning snack when Ann detected the smell of smoke in the room. Looking up she saw smoke coming from an electrical heating vent. She took the small whistle off the hook near the refrigerator and blew loudly.

The children looked around at each other and then began to walk toward the front door accompanied by Mary and Beth. On the way out of the door, Beth picked up the attendance list. Ann checked the two large closets and the bathroom before calling the fire department. Since the emergency numbers were posted by the phone, she could call for immediate assistance.

Mary and Beth walked with the children to the large tree in the yard. Beth checked the attendance list to see that all children who had signed in were in the yard.

Fortunately, the smoke was from an electrical malfunction that did not develop into a fire. The fire department was able to detect the problem and disconnect the power to the area until repairs could be made. The children returned to the center excitedly talking about the red fire trucks and the flashing lights.

While evaluating their day that afternoon, the caregivers continually expressed their relief that a panic situation had been avoided by planning ahead. They had agreed in September on the emergency procedures to be used. These had been written down and posted on the staff bulletin board. When Mary started work last week, Ann had given her a copy and had reviewed them with her.

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## TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT FIRE SAFETY

Although children under age five make up only 7% of the national population, they make up 17% of all persons killed in fires. Those of us who care for children can respond to this tragic fact by teaching them some basic facts about fire safety so that they can help protect themselves.

While doing this, we have to keep in mind the things that they will be able to understand and be careful that our teaching doesn't backfire. For example, if we show pictures of children playing with matches and say "don't do this," the children we are teaching may concentrate on the picture and not on the "DON'T". They could imitate the thing we want them to avoid. It might be better to teach them to tell an adult when ever they happen to find a match. Because preschoolers have limited vocabularies; they may not understand words like "scald" or "electrical appliance." Instead we need to provide clear, simple concepts with plenty of time allowed for them to grasp the ideas. Some concepts that preschoolers can learn are these:

- Fire is hot and can burn things.
- Hot things can hurt and burn us.
- Matches are for grown ups.
- Put a burn in cool water.

When teaching these concepts, it's important to get plenty of feedback from the children. Sometimes we can be amazed at the creative meanings that children give to what we think we said.

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## FIRE SAFETY AND PREVENTION IN THE FAMILY DAY CARE HOME

Since most people have not experienced a house fire, it is difficult to appreciate the seriousness and real tragedy that it can cause. As with most serious situations, we tend to believe that "it couldn't happen to me." In Michigan alone there were 323 deaths due to fire last year. Seventy-five percent of these deaths occurred in the home.

Fire prevention experts report that two key factors in an effective fire safety program are **early detection of the fire** and a prearranged and practiced plan for exiting the home. Remember in a fire, seconds count. Some important considerations in developing your fire prevention and safety plan are as follows:

### Smoke Detectors

Install at least one detector and preferably one on each level of your home.

Test your detector at least monthly. The best way to do this is to blow out a lit match about a foot below the detector. The smoke should trigger the alarm.

### Fire Extinguisher

Keep a multi-purpose fire extinguisher handy. It should be at least a 2A 10BC type and installed in a potential fire hazard area.

Read the instructions and know how to use the extinguisher.

### Electrical Fire Safety

Make sure that all fuses are of the correct size. Overloading the electrical system with improper sized fuses could result in fire.

Too many extension cords on one outlet could have the same results.

Repair or replace any damaged electrical cords, plugs and appliances. Lamps or other appliances that fall over easily are fire hazards.

### Flammables

Store gasoline and other volatile flammables in the garage or other storage area outside the home, well out of reach of children.

Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach.

Keep combustible materials such as paper cardboard or laundry stored away from your furnace or hot water heater.

Provide a barrier to keep children away from your furnace and hot water heater.

Have your furnace inspected regularly. Dirty and faulty furnaces can present a real fire hazard.

Remember the use of portable space heaters is prohibited by licensing rules in both family and group day care homes.

Begin your fire safety and prevention program today. Remember a fire can occur in your home. Action that you take today may prevent a tragedy tomorrow.

*by Bruce Brown*  
Family Home Licensing Consultant  
Grand Rapids

### Types of Wood for Burning

- Use Seasoned Hickory, Maple, Elm, Oak, and Birch.
  - They burn the best and yield the most heat.
- Avoid Pine, Spruce, other soft woods as well as any green wood.
  - They increase creosote build-up and produce less heat.

### Creosote: WHAT IS IT and Checking for Build-up

- It is a black tarry chemical substance
  - it is flammable and will ignite within the normal heat range of a wood burning unit.
- Routinely tap the connector pipe. If a thud sound occurs, instead of a pip or ring, build-up is present.
- Look up the chimney with a mirror (at the cleanout pipe) for build-up.
- Any signs of build-up must be cleaned out routinely from the connector and the chimney.

## THE WOODBURNING STOVE

With the rising cost of heating, the woodburner is becoming an increasingly popular supplement to the furnace in many family and group day care homes.

Improperly installed and maintained stoves can result in a house or chimney fire or carbon monoxide poisoning.

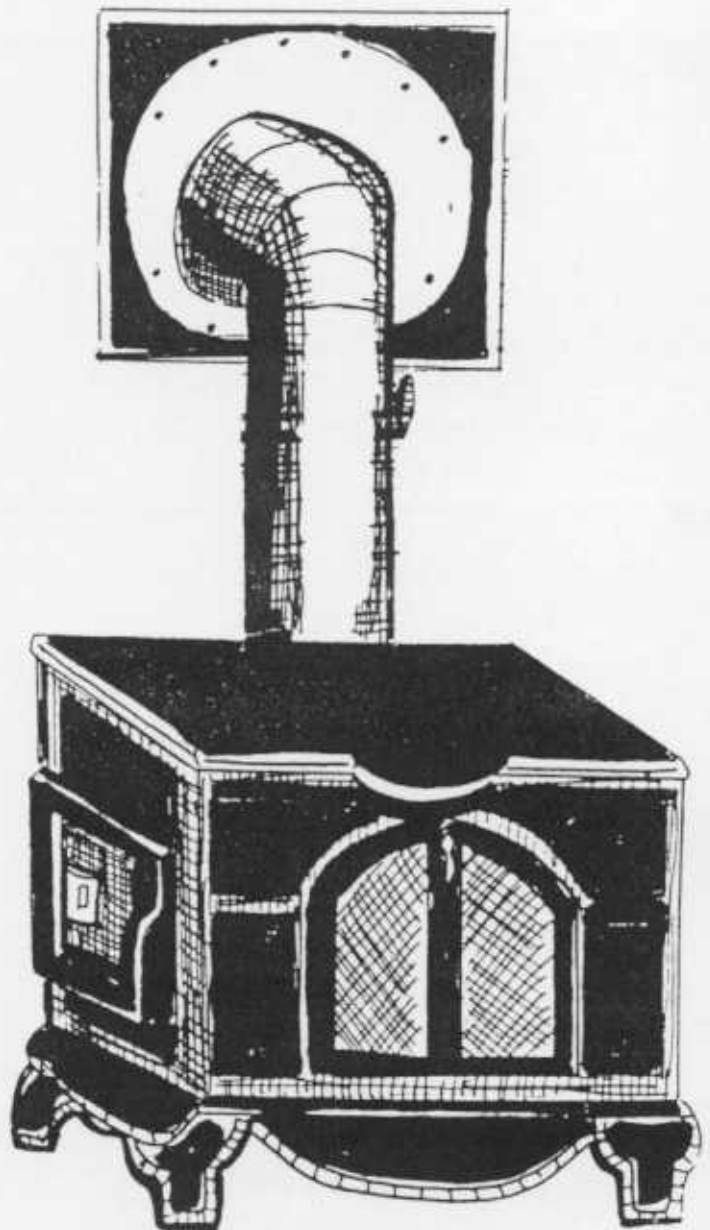
Your woodburner should be installed in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations and specifications. Woodburners installed in Michigan after April 1980 require inspection by the Department of Labor to assure safe installation (see **Resources**).

Here are a few tips to help assure the safe operation and maintenance of your woodburner:

- 1) Either locate the stove where the children can't reach it or provide a protective barrier.
- 2) Never use flammable liquid to start your stove fire.
- 3) Always use seasoned firewood. Burning unseasoned wood can result in creosote build-up, the increased risk of a chimney fire, and the need for more frequent cleaning.
- 4) Never use your woodburner as a trash incinerator. Flames roaring up the flue can cause a chimney fire.
- 5) Have your chimney and stovepipe cleaned at least annually.
- 6) Have your woodburner, stovepipe and chimney cleaned and inspected by a licensed heating contractor at least annually, prior to the heating season.
- 7) Keep all combustibles at least 3 feet away.
- 8) Make sure your fire extinguisher and smoke detector work.

If you have any questions about the safety of your woodburner, contact your day care home licensing consultant or your local fire department.

*by Bruce Brown*  
Family Home Licensing Consultant  
Grand Rapids



# FIRE EVACUATION PLANS FOR HOMES

## EVACUATION PLANS

Develop an evacuation plan for each area of your home that children use for playing or sleeping. Include basement, if applicable; rooms on main floor; rooms on upper floors (on the second level) designate a window leading to a porch or garage roof.

Identify two (2) ways to get out of every room that children use. Possibilities include: exit doors, openable windows, escape ladders, rope ladders, etc.

Practice removing the children from each of these locations by at least 2 ways out from each room.

Practice for a real emergency by pretending that the primary way out is blocked; practice the drill by going out the second way. Show children how to crawl on the floor in case the room is filled with smoke.

## CONSIDERATIONS

Can you evacuate all the children in your care at one time? In just one trip out? Never re-enter a burning building. Never leave children behind, they may panic and not follow you out.

Can you carry all non-walkers and also instruct the rest of the children to accompany you safely?

If you provide night care and sleep at the same time as the children sleep, how will you know if there is a fire emergency? Consider the installation of a smoke detector on each floor of your home.

Have you established a safe meeting place outside your home?

Do you have access to a nearby telephone to call the fire department?

Do you have access to a nearby home or business for shelter?

Practice this plan often with the children. Children tend to hide from smoke and fire by getting into closets or under beds.

## NIGHT CARE

Carefully consider what rooms or areas you use for overnight care of children. Will the children be accessible to you in an emergency?

Are you providing any emergency lighting? (flashlight, etc.)

Do you know how to check for the heat level in a fire situation? Feel the nearest closed door. If it is hot, do not open it because the air on the other side is superheated and could be fatal for you.

In a fire emergency, young children tend to hide. Check under beds and cribs and in closets and bathrooms for any missing children.

*by Judy Gaspar*  
Center Licensing Consultant  
Kalamazoo



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## FIRE EVACUATION PLANS FOR CENTERS

### An EVACUATION PLAN includes:

written procedures for evacuation and care of children and staff;

diagram of facility, showing all evacuation routes to safe area outside;

posting of diagram by the door of each room used by children;

training of each staff member in responsibilities in an emergency;

posting the telephone number of your fire department near your telephone;

### A FIRE DRILL PROGRAM includes:

using a signal, audible throughout all the facility, separate and distinct from all other sounds, and used for no other purpose;

practicing the fire drills;

keeping a written permanent log;

assuring that the frequency is sufficient to familiarize all children and staff with the drill procedure so that orderly, safe exiting is achieved.

### CONSIDERATIONS

scheduling drills on different days of the week, at different times of the day, during different kinds of program activities;

frequency of once a month or more often if the patterns of children's enrollment or other factors warrant it;

placement of related items in one place (manual alarm, evacuation plan, diagram, attendance records; fire drill log, etc.);

movement of infants and toddlers in wheeled equipment, such as porta-cribs, wagons, etc.;

care of children with special needs (visual signal for hearing impaired, body link for vision impaired).

installation of smoke detectors on each floor of your building.

by Judy Gaspar  
Center Licensing Consultant  
Kalamazoo



## RESOURCES ON FIRE SAFETY

### For parents and providers

Department of Labor  
Bureau of Construction Codes  
State Secondary Complex  
P.O. Box 30015  
7150 Harris Drive  
Lansing, MI 48909

**Wood Heat, The Safe Way . . .**  
Farm Bureau Insurance Co.

**Enjoy Your Woodburning Stove . . .**  
The Safe Way  
State Farm Insurance

**Make Time For Fire Safety**  
from your local Burger King

**The Story of the Little Red Fire Hat** — Directions and patterns for a flannel board fire prevention game and story for children 3-6 years.

Write: Fire Protection Publication  
Oklahoma State University  
Stillwater, OK 74074

free with a 9 x 12 self-addressed envelope.

Film **Snuffy's Fire Safety Brigade** loaned free from Burger King

**Sesame Street Fire Safety Resource Book** — Community Education Services

"Planning for Fire Safety" Ruth Harvey Collins in "Administration: **Making Programs Work for Children and Families**, Ed. Dorothy Hewes, NAEYC (1979)

**Fire In Your Home** — National Fire Protection Association, Batterymarch Park, Quincy, Mass 02269 \$1.25/copy or #SPP52.

**In a Fire, Seconds Count** — 1975 National Fire Protection Association

Other materials from insurance agencies.

### Resources for Children

Bourhe, **A Dog Walk** — gr. 1-3  
Cox, Mike, **Fire Drill Wasserman** K-1  
Daub, Edward, **Fire** K-3

Eichelberger, Rosa, **Big Fire in Baltimore** 3rd and up

Furchgott, Terry & Dawson, Linda **Phobe and the Hot Water Bottles** K-3

McDonnell, Lori, **Susan Comes Through the Fire** 1-3

Moskin, Marietta, **Lipliet and the Fire Kittens** 1-3

Trivers, J. & Millman, J., **Red Fire Book**

Werner, Jane, **Smokey the Bear** up to 3

Brown, Margaret Wise, **The Little Fireman** pre-school to 3rd

Lenski, Lois, **The Little Fire Engine** preschool to 3rd

Zeffo, Georgia, **Big Book of Real Fire Engines** preschool to 3rd

*by Pat VanDyke*  
Family Home Licensing Consultant  
Montcalm County

(from the Director continued)

opportunity to help shape their development intellectually, emotionally, and socially during their formative years. To underestimate the impact that day care providers make on pre-school children would do an injustice to your role as a child care provider and to the potential growth that a child might otherwise achieve.

I am excited about the opportunities **Better Homes and Centers** will provide for improving the communication between day care providers and the Division of Child Day Care Licensing. It is my sincere hope that through this vehicle we can take advantage of the highly trained and skilled Division staff and the positive experiences that home and center operators have every day to achieve a better appreciation for each other plus enhance the joint effort in meeting common goals for young children in day care settings.

Sincerely,

Ted deWolf, Director  
Division of Child Day Care Licensing

The most important thing they had done was to practice fire drills with the children often. When the whistle blew this time, they immediately went into their evacuation procedure because it was familiar to them.

Would you have been able to breathe a sigh of relief if this had occurred in your home or center or do you need some preventive planning?

*by Carole Grates*  
Center Licensing Consultant  
Saginaw Office

The Department of Social Services will not discriminate against any individual or group because of race, sex, religion, age, national origin, color, marital status, handicap, or political beliefs.

We need to remember that many pre-schoolers will be unable to comprehend "if-then" statements such as "Touch the door; if it is hot, don't open it." But they can practice simple life-saving actions such as "stop, drop, and roll if your clothes catch on fire" or "crawl low under smoke." Caregivers can arrange chairs or a low rope barrier for children to crawl under. The Sesame Street Fire Safety Resource book listed elsewhere in this newsletter includes a record that can be used to teach children to drop and roll instead of running should their clothing catch on fire. Even without the record, caregivers can practice the skill with small groups of children, emphasizing that children should **not** run and that they should roll over and over until the flames are out.

All of these ideas will help to protect children in their own homes too, so it is a good idea to let parents know what you are teaching. They can probably help by reviewing the ideas with their children, and they may be inspired to establish and practice an escape route at home.

*by Patricia Hearron*  
Center Licensing Consultant  
Saginaw Office

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tear off

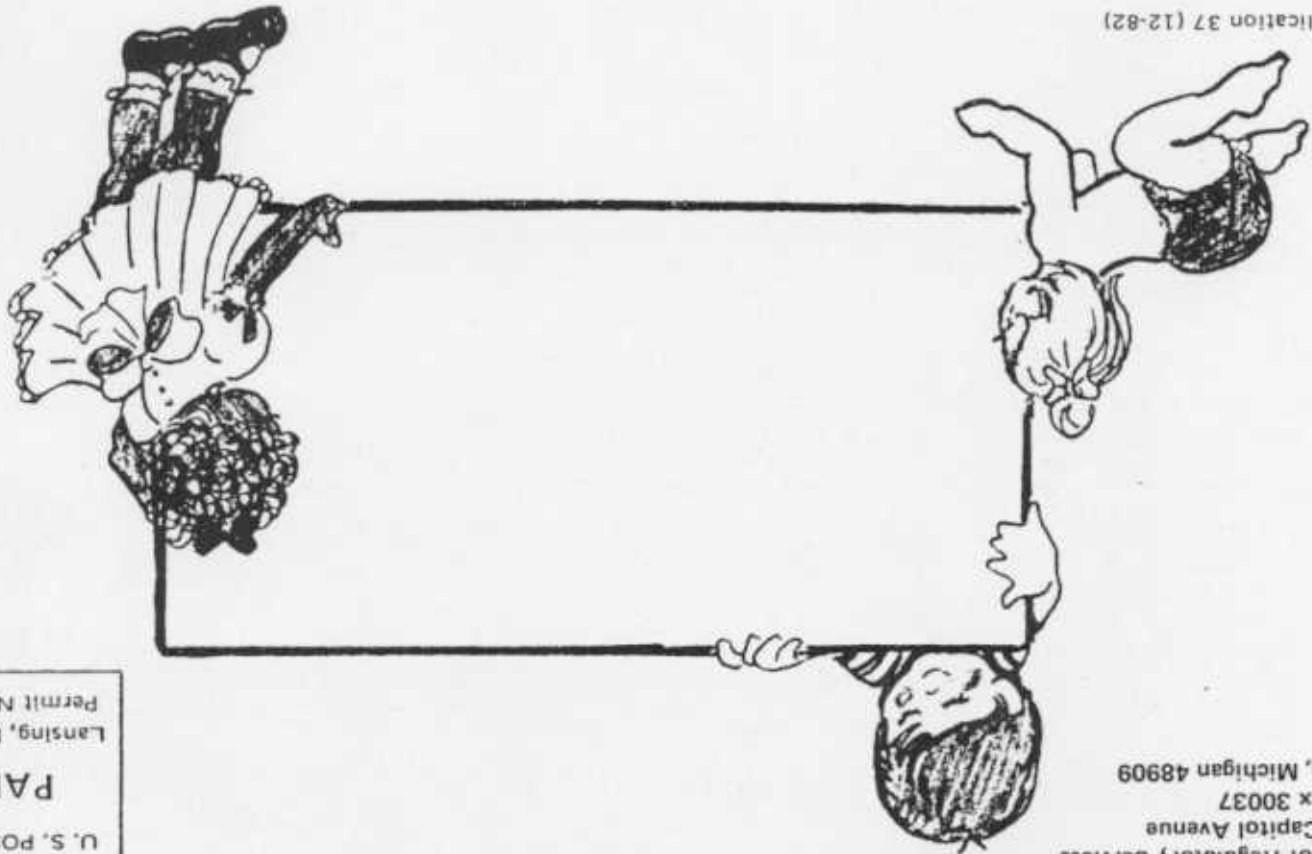
We hope you have found the first issue of **Better Homes and Centers** to be interesting and informative. The theme for the next issue is the **Business of Day Care**. Although the topics for these first issues were selected by the Editorial Staff, we look forward to filling them with articles, cartoons, questions and answers, ideas you found that work, funny incidents, clever sayings, resources and more, coming from you—providers and parents.

In addition, we would like to get a feel for other topics you would be interested reading about in future newsletters. Please check those topics below and be sure to add any others not listed.

- ☐ Health and safety
- ☐ Programming for special age groups
- ☐ Child management and guidance
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Remember — this is your Newsletter.  
Send articles and other materials to:

Judy Levine  
Division of Child Day Care Licensing  
300 S. Capitol Avenue  
P.O. Box 30037  
MSA Building  
Lansing, MI 48909



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**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Division of Child Day Care Licensing is initiating a newsletter to all child care centers and homes for the purpose of creating a positive atmosphere between the Division and the child day care provider community of this state. Our intent in developing this newsletter is to establish a communication vehicle which will allow us to share various sorts of information with child care providers.

This information will include such things as concerns, problems, constraints from the Division's perspective; articles written by home and center operators in which they share with all of us how they may have successfully handled certain situations, developed programs, etc.; articles written by Division field staff which will be consultative in nature intended to enhance the development of young children in child care centers and homes; and reprints of articles which we believe will be of interest to you.

We also intend to make an effort through the newsletter to obtain feedback from homes and centers regulated by the Department. We will be soliciting your comments on a number of subjects as well as inviting you to share your successes with us for possible inclusion in this newsletter.

We are also including in this issue a questionnaire which gives you an opportunity to advise us on items of interest you would like to see addressed through this newsletter. Your input will enable us to be as responsive as possible to your concerns and interests.

We are most anxious to promote a team concept in meeting the needs of children in day care facilities. We can best accomplish this if we together as licensees and licensors recognize that these young children are vulnerable and need protection, but also that they represent a valuable future resource to their communities and their country. We have an